

MONDAY
12 JULY
Exodus 1:8-14. 22
Psalm 124
Matthew 10:34 – 11:1

TUESDAY
13 JULY
Exodus 2:1-15
Psalm 69:1-2. 31-end
Matthew 11:20-24

WEDNESDAY
14 JULY
Exodus 3:1-6. 9-12
Psalm 103:1-7
Matthew 11:25-27

THURSDAY
15 JULY
Exodus 3:13-20
Psalm 105:1-2. 23
Matthew 11:28-end

FRIDAY
16 JULY
Exodus 11:10 – 12:14
Psalm 116:10-end
Matthew 12:1-8

SATURDAY
17 JULY
Exodus 12:37-42
Psalm 136:1-4. 10-15
Matthew 12:14-21

REFLECTION

When everything seems to be going wrong, it's hard to trust that God is at work. At the start of our Exodus readings things appear bleak for the Israelites. God's promise to Abraham that his descendants would become a great nation and possess the land of Canaan, seems in tatters. Abraham's offspring are now very far from the promised land, enslaved in Egypt and facing annihilation as Pharaoh seeks to wipe them out.

However, Pharaoh completely fails to thwart God's plans, for the Lord subverts his wicked schemes. The drowning of Hebrew boys leads to Moses being rescued from the Nile and becoming part of Pharaoh's own family. This not only ensures his safety but is likely to have provided him with an education which will be helpful in leading the Israelites later.

Even when Moses is forced to flee into the wilderness far from his own people, God's plans are not frustrated. The Lord speaks to Moses through a burning bush. And when Pharaoh refuses to let the Israelites go, God finds a way of overcoming his resistance and delivering the people. What a reminder that, no matter how bad our circumstances, there is always hope in God.

PRAAYER

Dear Lord, thank you that we can always trust you no matter how trying and hopeless our circumstances appear. Help us to grow in our faith and keep going when we are unsure of your plans and struggle to see a way forward.



Victorian stained glass window showing Moses and the burning bush. BasPhoto/Shutterstock.com

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BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

PART XXXV – HABAKKUK – A BOOK OF BIG QUESTIONS

Georgina Byrne continues our book-by-book series about the Bible.

“God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, and makes me tread upon the heights.” (Habakkuk 3:19)

Why are wicked people able to do as they please? Why is there no justice? When we are afraid or anxious about the state of the nations, where is God?

Such questions echo through centuries as faithful people wrestle with matters of justice and equity. One such wrestler is Habakkuk, whose name means *“embrace”* or *“wrestle”*, capturing something of his short and passionate tussle with God. The book see-saws between Habakkuk's protestations and God's responses, culminating in the prophet's prayer and, ultimately, his trust in God's goodness.

The book is set in the context of the late seventh century BC, on the cusp of the Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem and the exile. This is a time of fear and increased anxiety – an atmosphere in which prophets usually expose the sins of the people that have brought them to this state of affairs. But Habakkuk does not challenge his hearers; he challenges God. Why, he asks God, why do you allow evil to go unpunished? *“O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not listen?”* (Habakkuk 1:2). God responds by saying that the Chaldeans (Babylonians) will, by their coming invasion, punish the wicked.

But why, Habakkuk laments, does God use the wicked Chaldeans in order to punish unjust and faithless Judeans? God counters by saying that ultimately the Chaldeans too shall be crushed and the righteous shall be saved. Habakkuk's response is to pray for mercy, and to trust in the salvation of God. God, who has covered the heavens in glory and filled the earth with praise, will surely bring good things, and Habakkuk can rejoice.

This is a short book that asks big questions of God. It asks where God is to be found in matters of justice and oppression. God does not give an entirely satisfactory answer, but the strength of the book rests in the prophet's deep and abiding trust that, however distressing the world is now, God will ultimately act justly.

LIVE the WORD

SUSTAINING YOU THROUGH THE WEEK

Edited by Caroline Hodgson and Heather Smith



Sixth week after Trinity

Monday 12 July to Saturday 17 July 2021

WEEK